

Clarke named Chamber's 'Citizen of the Year'

By KYLE JARVIS
Staff Writer

The Greater Claremont Chamber of Commerce has selected longtime Claremont resident Don Clarke as its 2008 "Citizen of the Year."

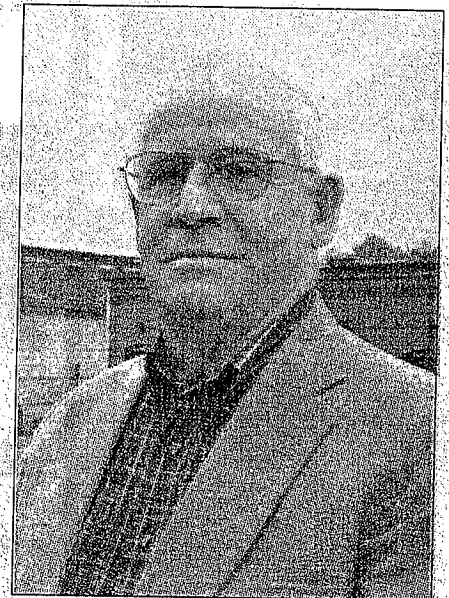
Picking Clarke for the award may have seemed like a no-brainer for

Claremont s o m e . Among his areas of service to the city, Clarke has served on the planning board, the school board, the vocational school advisory committee, the school district strategic planning committee, and the Claremont industrial

development authority, to name just a few.

"I came in (last) Wednesday morning and I had a message from Shelly (Hudson, Chamber director)," said Clarke from his Town and Country office last week. "I figured she wanted me to join the Chamber or something. Then they came down and told me in person. I was very surprised, it was totally unexpected."

Moving to Claremont at the age of 12, Clarke graduated from Stevens High School and went away to college at the University of New Hampshire, where he majored in agricultur-



JESSE BAKER PHOTO

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al engineering. After graduation he came back home and got into a partnership with his dad, the very well known Sydney J. Clarke, for the family farm.

"I came back and went into business with my dad," he said. "My father served the city for many years, but he never won this honor. They named the industrial park (on Grissom Lane) after him, but he didn't live to see it."

In 1992 Clarke joined the team at Town and Country Realty, where he remained through 1999.

After that he went to work for Oxbrook Realty in Claremont, and stayed there until 2002 at which point he returned to Town and Country.

"I've also been filling in as the

interim director for the State Fish and Game department," he said. "I don't mind doing it, but I won't be sorry when they find someone else, it takes up a lot of time."

Clarke previously served on the Fish and Game Commission for nearly four years from '99 to '02. He was also a county commissioner for Sullivan County from 2001 to 2006.

Asked if receiving this award is one of his proudest moments, Clarke said he has many such moments to look back upon.

"It's obviously not a 'what have you done for me lately' award, because I've kind of been off the radar for a while," he said. "I guess I think of it as a sort of lifetime achievement award. After all I began volunteering here in

Claremont in the '60's. But I've also been 'county commissioner of the year,' and 'realator of the year,' both of which I'm proud of. I've probably gotten more out of everything over the years than I've put into it."

Clarke also thanks his family for sticking by him through the good and the bad. "It's a family honor," he said. "There's always somewhat of an expense for my wife and kids, because I'm out working or traveling. But they've been great and I owe them a lot for their support."

A ceremony honoring Clarke will be held May 29 at 5:30 p.m. at the Elks Club on Summer Street. For more information contact the Chamber of Commerce at 543-1296.